

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently amended) In an apparatus for thixocasting a cast iron, comprising at least a pair of dies that can be freely opened and closed to form a die cavity which is to be filled with semi-molten cast iron under a pressure, injection means operable to inject the semi-molten injected material into the die cavity through an injection path, and a gate located at the entry of the die cavity so as to throttle entry from the injection means into the die cavity, the improvement wherein the gate **has a gate hole and** is constituted from a separate gate member and is disposed at the entry of the cavity each time an injection casting operation is carried out and is taken out together with the casting after the injection casting operation is completed, wherein the gate member has a projecting portion formed all around the gate hole facing the injection path, **the projecting portion including a wide, flat surface portion which begins at the edge of the gate hole.**

5. (Canceled)

6. **(Currently amended)** In a method of thixocasting a cast iron, which comprises filling a cavity in dies with **a billet of** semi-molten cast iron material that is injected through a gate that throttles the entry of the cavity under a pressure, the improvement comprising the step of covering only a circumference of the **billet made of the** semi-molten cast iron material prior to being injected through the gate by a steel sheet 0.2 to 0.5 mm thick and having a melting point higher than that of the semi-molten cast iron material.

7. **(Currently amended)** The method of thixocasting a cast iron according to claim 6, further comprising the step of injecting the semi-molten cast iron material through a gate hole having a projecting portion formed all around the gate hole and facing the injection path, **the projecting portion including a wide, flat surface portion which begins at the edge of the gate hole.**

8. **(Previously presented)** The method of thixocasting a cast iron according to claim 6, wherein the steel sheet is a stainless steel sheet.

9. **(Previously presented)** The method of thixocasting a cast iron according to claim 7, wherein the steel sheet is a stainless steel sheet.